



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Director's Report

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Heritage Housing Partners held their Annual Legacy Award Breakfast at The Meeting House on April 3, 2019. Congratulations to Patricia Sylvester, Heritage Housing Partners 2019 Legacy Award Winner! County Executive Ball and Council Chairwoman Christiana Rigby made remarks before Paul Casey of the Downtown Columbia Housing Corporation presented the award. Pat's commitment and passion for affordable housing in our county made her an excellent choice for the award. Kevin Kelehan, last year's award winner, was also at the event to congratulate Pat.

Bridges to Housing Stability held their Annual Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser at Savage Mill on Sunday, April 7th. This is one of their biggest fundraisers of the year. County Executive Ball, School Board Chair Mavis Ellis and I participated as spirit judges for the event. Peter Engel of the Housing Commission, Christiana Mercer-Rigby of the County Council and Jackie Scott of DCRS were the tasting judges. Congregations from 9 churches prepared chili for everyone to enjoy. It was a delicious and fun way to support one of our housing partners in the community!

On April 9th, I participated in a radio interview with Cris Oveido at Howard Community College's Dragon Radio station. Since April is an open enrollment month for the MIHU homeownership program, it was a good opportunity to promote the MIHU homeownership and rental programs, as well as other housing resources available through the County. I appreciate HCC's assistance in helping us get the information out to individuals and families that want to live in the County.

The Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition hosted the Annual Breakfast with the State's Secretary of the Department of Housing and Community Development, Kenneth C. Holt, on April 11, 2019, at the Blackwall Barn and Lodge in Gambrills, Maryland. This event is an opportunity to hear directly from state housing representatives regarding affordable housing challenges, accomplishments and future programs. The awards ceremony portion of the event was particularly exciting because Heritage Housing Partners won the "Excellence in Affordable Housing Preservation" award for their redevelopment of the Shalom Square senior housing project in Columbia. Congratulations to Grace Morris, Executive Director, and the entire HHP team that helped make that project so successful!

On April 28th, County Executive Ball hosted a Money Matters Financial Wellness Fair at the Columbia Mall outside Lord & Taylor. He had previously hosted this event for several years as a member of the County Council. More than 20 agencies representing credit resources, banks, lenders and financial planning, as well as County resources, were on hand to provide information to interested shoppers. In addition to providing affordable housing resources, Department staff set up a big cardboard house for kids to color and decorate while their parents talked with vendors. It was fun to see the kids, and sometimes even the parents, spend time coloring and decorating the house together. We are planning to participate in this event next year!

Kelly Cimino, Director

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAMS DIVISION

MODERATE INCOME HOUSING UNIT PROGRAM (MIHU)

Please see the attached MIHU Report.

SETTLEMENT DOWNPAYMENT LOAN PROGRAM (SDLP)

The Settlement Downpayment Loan Program is funded by the Department's Community Renewal fund. This program is responsible for increasing homeownership in the County and is critical to the success of the MIHU program. Homebuyers must be income-eligible and demonstrate a need for downpayment and closing cost assistance.

For FY19 so far, 20 MIHU buyers received SDLP loans, including 8 Workforce Initiative loans, totaling \$386,977, and 44 non-MIHU buyers received SDLP loans, including 22 Workforce Initiative loans, for a total of \$754,909. Requests for funding from this program exceeded estimates for the first 6 months of the fiscal year. While funds remain limited, funding is still available for 2019. Potential buyers and lenders may visit the department's website for funding updates.

REINVEST*RENOVATE*RESTORE HOUSING REPAIR PROGRAM (RRR)

The Reinvest*Renovate*Restore Housing Repair Program is funded by the Department's Community Renewal fund. This program can help income eligible homeowners make repairs to enhance safety, accessibility and livability in their homes. Applicants who are ineligible based on income or credit are referred to Rebuilding Together and/or the Maryland Whole Home Program for assistance. Four new applications were received in April and two applications are in process. Renovations on one home were completed this month. The Loan Review Committee meets twice a month to review loan applications for funding.

Staff presented information about the RRR program to the Village of Oakland Mills Board and residents at their regular monthly meeting at The Other Barn on Tuesday, April 23rd. The homes in Oakland Mills are 40+ years old so residents were very interested in learning about the opportunity to borrow funds at low interest rates (0 – 2%) to make home improvements. Staff is planning to present RRR information to residents at other village board meetings in the upcoming months.

MARYLAND WHOLE HOME PROGRAM

The Maryland Whole Home Program (formerly known as MHRP) can be used to assist eligible homeowners secure low interest loans or grants to make home repairs and bring properties into compliance with applicable building codes and standards. The program is designed to benefit households with incomes that are at or below 80% of the statewide median income. Homeowners must be current on their mortgage, insurance and property tax payments to be eligible for the program. While this program often provides grants or 0% interest loans to income-eligible homeowners, the State's processing time for these loans is approximately 6 – 8 months. Homeowners that have urgent or immediate needs are not a good fit for this program. One loan closed and received funding in February. Renovations to the property should be completed in May. Two loans are in underwriting with closing dates anticipated to be scheduled in May.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND GRANTS DIVISION

FFY2019 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

Howard County has concluded all the statutorily required elements of the planning and writing of the FFY2019 Annual Action Plan. Council Resolution 48-2019 was presented to the County Council on April 22, 2019. The Council held a work session on April 29th. They are expected to vote on the resolution on May 6, 2019. Once the resolution is approved, staff intends to submit the Final FFY2019 Annual Action Plan to HUD before the deadline on May 17, 2019.

THE ANALYSIS OF IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING CHOICE (AI)

The Department (DHCD) is working in collaboration with the Office of Human Rights (OHR) and the Housing Commission (HCHC) on the County's Action Steps as it relates to the Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (Regional AI 2019). Based on guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), six local jurisdictions and five public housing authorities (PHAs) in the Baltimore metropolitan area are collaborating with the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) to create a new Regional AI 2019 Plan. The initial draft is due to be released in July. Public comment sessions will follow the release.

The Fair Housing Act, first passed in 1968, prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, and family status. It also requires HUD, and thus any jurisdiction or PHA receiving funding from HUD, to administer their housing and urban development programs in a way that "affirmatively furthers" the policies of the law.

A 2015 rule from HUD, based on many court rulings under the Fair Housing Act, says, "Affirmatively furthering fair housing means taking meaningful actions, in addition to combating discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity based on protected characteristics." Both the 2015 rule and HUD's 1995 guidance for conducting an AI requires jurisdictions receiving federal funds to examine data on classes protected under the Fair Housing Act, identify barriers to housing choice for those protected classes, and set out an action plan for addressing those impediments.

AI FOCUS GROUP HEARINGS

The AI process includes substantial opportunities for stakeholder and public involvement. Howard County DHCD, OHR, HCHC and the BMC will facilitate two local opportunities for interested stakeholders to give input into the AI planning process. Both hearings will be held at the Community Resources Campus (9820 Patuxent Woods Drive, Room 211, Columbia, MD 21046).

Upcoming AI Focus Group Hearings:

- **Thursday, May 16, 2019 at 1:00 PM**
- **Thursday, June 6, 2019 at 6:00 PM**

A survey will also be made available in print, and on the website, in English and Spanish to help inform the Regional AI draft.

CDBG AND HOME COMBINED ACTIVITIES

During the month of April, the HOME Program Specialist conducted one on-site monitoring visit to a non-profit affordable housing provider. As mandated by the new HOME rule, (effective 2013) HOME-funded rental projects should be monitored every three years for program and fiscal compliance.

The Grants team received quarterly reports from subrecipients in April. The reports provide program highlights, accomplishments and/or setbacks faced by the grantee. These reports are critical to effectively managing grants and offering technical assistance to grantees when needed.

COUNTY FUNDED PROJECTS

RENEW HOWARD PROGRAM

The Real Estate Charitable Foundation of Maryland, Inc., a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation (the "Administrator"), a supporting organization of the Community Foundation of Howard County, also a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation ("Cfhoco") announced that it was soliciting competitive applications (Request for Proposals or RFP) from eligible mortgage lending institutions to participate in a neighborhood revitalization loan program, Revitalizing Neighborhoods EveryWhere in Howard County "RENEW Howard" (referred to as the "Program") whereby Lenders would be incentivized to make low-interest loans to homebuyers to acquire and improve aging homes in Howard County. The purpose of the Program is to encourage new investment in and revitalization of neighborhoods throughout the County.

To incentivize Lenders, the County has provided grant funds to the Administrator to be used as a Loan Loss Reserve Fund for this proposed mortgage program in the amount of approximately \$2,000,000. It is anticipated that this level of funding will be sufficient to induce a private Lender or Lenders to contribute loan funds of as much as \$20 million to the Program.

A second Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking lenders for the program was released on March 27, 2019. The RFP is posted on the Department's website and interested lenders may contact Linda Phillips at lphillips@howardcountymd.gov. A pre-proposal conference was held on April 16th. Based on the feedback from the lenders in attendance, the RFP submission deadline was extended until May 24, 2019.

ACQUISITION/REHAB PROGRAM

There are funds in the Department's FY19 budget for the acquisition and rehabilitation of existing scattered site properties to be leased to low-income individuals and families in Howard County. For the second year, the Department granted funds directly to Bridges. Bridges acquires units to lease to households earning up to 60% of Howard County area median income as part of their Bridges Alliance program. Bridges received \$500,000 of funding on July 1, 2018. By adding matching funds of \$125,000., they were able to purchase and renovate 4 condominium units in Columbia and Ellicott City. These units are providing stable housing for 5 adults and 9 children. Bridges helps low wage working households find affordable housing units and reduce their rent burden. As of 3/31/19, the Bridges Alliance is renting 34 units to income eligible households in the county.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

The Department could use MIHU fee in lieu funds to provide rental assistance to populations at risk of homelessness such as youths aging out of foster care and inmates leaving the County's detention center. In 2017, the Department funded the acquisition of a property by Bridges to Housing Stability to house returning citizens when they are released from the detention center. The home is currently occupied by a full-time house manager. The Department of Corrections refers eligible returning citizens to the property for rent-free transitional housing for up to 24 months. This transitional housing unit will fulfill an unmet need in the community and prevent potential homelessness for its residents. The Department is continuing to work with local non-profits and other County and State agencies to formulate strategies to provide affordable rental housing units for youths aging out of foster care in our County.

OUTREACH

HOMEBUYER EDUCATION WORKSHOP

This month's Homebuyer Education Workshop was held on Saturday, April 13, 2019. The next workshop led by Making Change is scheduled for Saturday, May 11, 2019, from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Community Resources Campus (9820 Patuxent Woods Drive, Columbia, MD 21046). Pre-registration is required. The 2019 workshop calendar is posted on the Department's website as well as FAQs. Prospective homebuyers can register to attend a workshop by sending an email to homebuyerclass@howardcountymd.gov.

MIHU WORKSHOP

July is the next open enrollment period for the MIHU homeownership program. The Department will hold several information workshops for potential MIHU renters and homebuyers during that time. Applications for MIHU rental units are available throughout the year. Visit our website for more information at www.howardcountymd.gov/housing.

CREDIT AND DEBT MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP SERIES

This 5-week workshop series is offered to MIHU applicants with low credit scores and/or excessive debt. Making Change leads the workshop sessions and works individually with applicants to help them become mortgage ready for the MIHU and SDLP programs. The next series will begin in May. Interested applicants for future sessions may contact the Housing Opportunities Team for more information at (410) 313-6318.

Attachment: MIHU Report
